

COUNCIL DELEGATED AUTHORITIES AND GUIDELINES FOR STAFF ACTIONS

Introduction:

NIH Policy requires an annual review by Advisory Councils of the delegated authorities and operational guidelines under which institute staff operate. These guidelines fall into two general categories. First, Council-delegated staff actions are actions delegated to staff that require no follow up action with Council except a follow-up report at the next regularly scheduled Advisory Council meeting. Second, Council delegates to staff certain operational actions that are required to ensure the smooth operations of the extramural division in conducting business with our grantees; these actions require the establishment of a threshold level for Council involvement and are listed as section II.

I. Council-Delegated Staff Actions:

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) extramural staff may take the following actions without Council review. However, staff actions in this section will be reported for the information of the Council at its next meeting.

1. Authorize relocation of a currently funded project to a new institution when the principal investigator transfers from one institution to another and the original grantee institution relinquishes the grant. Such projects may be supported at the new institution for a period of up to the remainder of the current project period and in an amount generally not to exceed that previously recommended for the remaining period.

This authorization also applies when the principal investigator moves to a new institution following concurrence with the Initial Review Group (IRG) action by Council, but prior to the time that an award is made.

2. Approve a new principal investigator or program director for a research grant or an institutional training grant, sub-project director or other key personnel on program projects or center grants, for a period equal to the time remaining on the current project. Such changes involving directors of the University-based Environmental Health Sciences (EHS) Centers and Marine and Freshwater Bio-medical Sciences (MFBS) Centers will be made on an interim basis pending review and approval by the Centers Subcommittee of Council.

3. Extend a project grant period with additional funds to assure orderly termination of the project or to protect the investment already made.

Staff, in discussion with the principal investigator, will determine the period of support and budget necessary to permit orderly termination of the research project. Special attention will be given to salary for essential staff, for purchase of supplies and for support of experimental animals. The (prorated) supplemental award should not exceed 12 months.

In the case of training grants, stipends may be provided until completion of the training for those trainees already appointed to the program.

In cases where a competing renewal application is deferred by either the Initial Review Group (IRG) or the Council, funds may be provided to permit support of the previously recommended research until review is completed and a final decision on the competing renewal application has been made. If a competing award is made, interim funds and the period of support may be deducted from the budget and budget period of the first year of the continuation award.

4. Authorize supplemental funds in an amount not to exceed \$35,000 direct costs to any center, program project, or other multi-disciplinary program grant or cooperative agreement for the purpose of supporting a conference, symposium or scientific workshop. This provision will apply only in those instances in which the principal investigator or center director can show that the meeting is necessary for the scientific community or Institute to react promptly to matters of major importance. The Director,

NIEHS, may approve supplementation of these grants, following consultation with members of the Centers Subcommittee of Council when centers are involved.

5. Authorize supplemental direct cost funds to a University-based EHS center or MFBS center in an amount not to exceed 15% of the direct costs recommended for a current annual budget period. This provision will apply only in those circumstances where: 1) the center director can show adequate justification that such funds are required to cover unanticipated costs, or are needed to respond to newly identified problems of urgent program priority, or 2) the supplement is in response to special programmatic or budgetary needs or opportunities identified by the Director, NIEHS. Supplementation of a center grant for the purposes under 1) may be approved only by the Director, NIEHS, following consultation with the Centers Subcommittee of Council.

6. With approval of the Director, NIEHS, make awards as either the primary Institute or through co-funding with another Institute/Center/Division, so long as the direct costs do not exceed \$50,000 per year. An application supporting such award must have been reviewed and scored by a chartered NIH initial review group prior to selection for funding by the Director, NIEHS.

7. Authorize the award of funds to research project grants based on the receipt of a supplemental application to provide support for re-entry into research, disabled or under-represented minority investigators, under-represented minority undergraduate or graduate students to work on research aims previously reviewed during competitive evaluation of the parent grant.

With the exception of 4, 5 and 7 above, all requests for additional direct costs which constitute an expansion of a funded research project must be submitted as a competitive supplemental application for review by the IRG and Council. Funds may only be awarded if recommended by the IRG and Council.

II. Institute Administrative Staff Action:

NIEHS extramural staff may take the following administrative actions without Council review or follow-up report to Council.

1. Approve continuation of grant under an interim principal investigator during the temporary absence of the principal investigator.
2. Approve extension of grants without additional funds on those grants requiring NIH approval.
3. Award supplements to the Chairperson of the Council committees and to the Environmental Health Sciences Review Committee(s) [chartered or ad hoc] in an amount necessary to carry out the functions of the committee(s).
4. Take final action to increase previously recommended and currently active research and training grants by the amount represented in institution-wide salary increases of grant-supported personnel or in stipends of grant-supported trainees in accord with NIH policy.
5. Take final action to provide for the employer's portion of mandatory contributions required of employers in their locality when not included in the application and when requested subsequently.
6. Take final action to adjust grants to add summer salaries to current or renewal grants for which authorizing overall policy was adopted by the grantee institution subsequent to the filing of the application.
7. Take final action to provide additional funds not to exceed \$25,000 direct costs 1) for emergency repair or purchase of equipment, 2) for purchase of animals or other necessary increases not related to expansion of the project or change of scientific content, in order to prevent delay or termination of a recommended research project or 3) for travel of Institute-initiated program coordination.

Reviewed and Approved by NAEHS Council in February 2000.

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Director, DERT, NIEHS

REVIEW OF GRANTS

I. Basis for Special Review of Individual Grant Applications:

Applications are presented to the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council (NAEHS) for special consideration when:

1. The research proposed has been identified by either Council or staff as being of particular interest or concern;
 2. Some aspect of the recommendation from the IRG has been questioned by either Council or staff, e.g., an apparent discrepancy between the comments in the summary statement and the percentile ranking/priority score;
 3. Ethical, hazard, or safety issues or concerns are identified by staff;
 4. Concerns about participation of human subjects are raised by the IRG or are identified by staff or Council, regardless of the percentile ranking/priority score;
 5. Concerns are raised regarding the principal investigator's inclusion of minorities and women in study populations, regardless of the percentile ranking/priority score;
 6. Concerns regarding the treatment of animals are raised;
 7. The application is a reviewed foreign application with a fundable percentile ranking;
 8. The application is a reviewed center grant application or supplement.
- All reviewed program project and regular research grant applications with a ranking better than the 35th percentile and a budget in excess of \$500,000 direct costs in any one year will be identified by staff and may be raised for individual discussion by Council.

Applications not identified for individual discussion are reviewed en bloc.

II. Options for Council Action for Special Review:

The following options generally are available to the Council for each application that is identified for individual discussion.

1. Concurrence with the IRG scientific merit review;
2. Change in priority status to HPP (High Program Priority) or to LPP (Low Program Priority). An HPP designation elevates the relative funding position of an application but does not necessarily assure funding. An LPP designation lowers the relative funding position of an application, but does not necessarily prohibit funding. Staff will give special consideration to all HPP and LPP recommendations in making a final funding decision;
3. Deferral to NIEHS staff for additional information for Council consideration at a subsequent meeting;
4. Deferral for reconsideration of the scientific and technical merit of an application by the same or another IRG;
5. Non-concurrence with IRG recommendation for policy, procedure, or administrative reasons; or

In specific cases, additional options may be available. These will be detailed by the staff for the Council's consideration as the need arises.

Reviewed and Approved by NAEHS Council in February 2000.

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